

## Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10  
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06  
TRSE-00 HA-05 EB-08 /072 W  
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R 151145Z FEB 78  
FM AMEMBASSY SANA  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3853  
INFO AMEMBASSY JIDDA  
AMEMBASSY AMMAN  
AMEMBASSY CAIRO  
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN  
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT  
AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI  
AMEMBASSY MUSCAT  
AMEMBASSY DOHA

S E C R E T SANA 0734

E.O. 11652: XGDS-2  
TAGS: PBOR, YE, SA  
SUBJECT: EASTERN BORDER OF YAR

BGIN SUMMARY: WHILE ONE OF MAJOR GOALS OF SAUDI ARABIA  
IN YAR MAY BE DEFINITION OF EASTERN BORDERS, RECORD OF THEIR  
ATTEMPT TO OPEN NEGOTIATIONS ON THIS MATTER MEANS THAT EVEN  
UNDER NEW GHASHMI REGIME IT WILL BE A LONG TIME BEFORE  
YEMENIS AND SAUDIS CAN AGREE TO THIS SENSITIVE SUBJECT.  
END SUMMARY

1. APPROXIMATELY A YEAR AGO, WHEN ABDAL KARIM AL-IRYANI  
BECAME MINISTER OF EDUCATION, HE DISCOVERED TEXT ON HISTORY  
OF YEMEN WAS READY FOR PUBLICATION. MAP IN BOOK SHOWED  
VERY ARBITRARY LINE DRAWN TO DELIMIT YAR FROM SAUDI ARABI.  
IN EFFORT TO AVOID MISUNDERSTANDING ON PART OF SAUDIS,  
ABDAL KARIM ARRANGED FOR LINE TO BE REMOVED ALONG WITH  
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POLITICAL DESIGNATIONS LEAVING ONLY PLACE NAMES AND GEO-  
GRAPHICAL FEATURES LIKE RUB AL KHALI. CHANGE WAS ALSO  
MADE TO SHOW THAT BORDER HAD NEVER BEEN NEGOTIATED OR  
DEMARCATED.

2. SAUDIS, NEVERTHELESS, TOOK GREAT UNGRADE AT  
ATTEMPT, AS THEY SAW IT, TO ASSERT YEMENI SOVEREIGNTY

IN UNDEFINED AREAS. THE UPSHOT WAS VISIT BY MINISTER OF INTERIOR IN MAR 77 TO PROPOSE TO YAR PRESIDENT HAMDI OPENING OF FORMAL TALKS ON BORDERS.

3. ACCORDING TO ABDAL KARIN HAMDI PROBED CAREFULLY TO GET SOME AIDEA OF SAUDI VIEWS ON THIS SUBJECT BEFORE COMMITTING HIMSELF TO PROCESS OF NEGOTIATIONS. WE DON'T KNOW WHAT SAUDIS SAID, BUT HAMDI DEFINITELY DECIDED THAT TIME WAS NOT PROPITIOUS TO TALK ABOUT THIS SENSITIVE SUBJECT AND, MOREOVER, HANDI SAID HE ADVISED SOUTH YEMENIS AS WELL TO AVOID SUBJECT WITH SAUDIS.

4. SAUDI VIEW IS PROBABLY THAT BORDER RUNS SOUTH FROM NAJRAN ACROSS MOUTH OF JAWF, SKIRTS MARIB TO EAST AND RUNS DOWN TO HARIB. YEMENI VIEW IS THAT TRADITIONAL TERRITORY OF YEMEN RUNS OUT AT LEAST TO SHARURA. ABDAL KARIM SAYS THE IMAMS USED TO KEEP DETACHMENT IN SHARURA, BUT SAUDI DEVELOPMENT OF THIS DESERT OUTPOST IN RECENT YEARS MAKES IT UNLIKELY THAT YEMENI CLAIM WOULD BE REVIVED. IN ANY CASE, OFFICIALS AND OTHERS IN MARIB SAY YEMEN EXTENDS 100 PLUS KILOMETERS TO EAST BUT DOES NOT INCLUDE SHARURA.

5. WHILE TERRITORY IN QUESTION IS ALMOST COMPLETELY UNINHABITED, SIGNIFICANCE OF YEMENI AND SAUDI CLAIMS MAY LIE THOUGH THAT THERE IS OIL THERE. SATELLIT PHOTOS  
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SHOW ANTICLINES AND SALTDOMES IN SANDY BASIN WHICH MAY HAVE BEEN ANCIENT SEABED. DISCOVERY OF OIL IN YEMEN WOULD CHANGE COMPLEXION OF POLITICS IN YEMEN DECISIVELY. MANY YEMENI LABORERS WOULD LEAVE KINGDOM AND YEMENI GOVERNMENT WOULD BE FREE TO DEVELOP ITS FORCES AND POLITICS INDEPENDENTLY OF SAUDI AID. THE PROSPECT OF WEALTHY AND CONSERVATIVE YAR FORCING UNITY ON PDRY AT SOME POINT IS NO MORE ATTRACTIVE TO SAUDIS THEN UNITY FORCES BY RADICAL PDRY ON MILITARILY WEAK YAR.

6. FOR YEMENI ISSUE HAS HISTORIC AS WELL AS POLITICAL OVERTONES BUT FOR MOMENT IS LARGELY ACADEMIC AS TRIBES IN EAST, WITH HEAVY SAUDI SUBSIDIES, BAR INTRODUCTION OF GOVERNMENT AUTHORITY INTO AREA. EXPLORATION IS PROBABLY NOT POSSIBLE, THEREFORE, ALTHOUGH GHASHMI, HIMSELF HAS RELAYED MESSAGES TO CONSORTIUM OF INTERESTED US OIL COMPANIES THAT HE WILL GUARANTEE THEIR SAFETY AND OPERATIONS IN THAT AREA IF THEY WANT CONCESSIONS THERE.

7. IN ANY CASE, FOR THE MOMENT WE SUPPOSE THAT YEMENI TACTIC TO THIS ISSUE WILL BE TO DELAY WHILE SAUDIS WILL

REGULARLY SUGGEST, IN LOW KEY MANNER, THAT NEGOTIATIONS  
BEGIN TO DEFINE BORDER.  
SCOTES

SECRET

NNN

## Message Attributes

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**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** BOUNDARY DETERMINATION, NEGOTIATIONS  
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**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 15 feb 1978  
**Decaption Date:** 20 Mar 2014  
**Decaption Note:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
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**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 20 Mar 2014  
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**Review Markings:**  
Sheryl P. Walter  
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